

Suggested Remarks
USAID Mission Director Jon D. Lindborg
Launch of Anticorruption Knowledge Resources
Ombudsman Building
May 30, 2006, 3:00 p.m.

Tanodbayan Merceditas Gutierrez, Honored
Guests, Colleagues, a pleasant good
afternoon to all of you.

Thank you for inviting me to this important
launch of the Ombudsman's Resource Book and
CD. It is a great pleasure for me to
address you on behalf of the U.S. Government
team working in the Philippines and the
United States Agency for International
Development.

Congratulations to Tanodbayan Merceditas Gutierrez and Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa Ignacio and the staff of the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Special Prosecutor as they mark the 18th anniversary of the founding of this prestigious and important office.

In recent years, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Special Prosecutor have made significant improvements in their ability to identify and punish corrupt public officials signaling the serious commitment of the Philippines to fighting public corruption. The United States and the American people stand with you as your ally in this important effort.

At a time when public resources are scarce, the Tanodbayan was able to secure the additional resources necessary to scale up the anticorruption activities of the office. Investigation and prosecution operations of the central office were re-engineered, expanded and strengthened to tackle the corruption cases that matter most.

Moreover, the Office of the Special Prosecutor is in the process of meeting the challenge of continuous trial in the Sandiganbayan. In our meetings with other donors and judicial experts, we have found universal support for the concept of speedy trials and the efforts to move towards that goal.

These bold institutional reforms have begun to gain ground. The Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Special Prosecutor are earning greater respect and fear from the corrupt officials they prosecute as well as earning the confidence of the public, as evidenced by their public perception ratings in Social Weather Station (SWS) and other surveys.

But of course, there is still much work to be done to meet the Tanodbayan's goal of making public corruption a high-risk, low-reward activity. USAID is ready and able to help the Office of the Tanodbayan in these efforts to implement the office's strategic plan; catch and convict major corrupt

officials; improve the conviction rate in the anti-graft court; recover the proceeds of corruption from corrupt officials, and make the tax evasion and anti-money laundering laws part of the anticorruption toolbox.

These initiatives are in line with President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's 10-Point Agenda as set forth in her Inaugural address in which she promised to, "crack down on wasteful and abusive officials and influence peddlers."

This commitment was restated in the President's address to the Philippines Development Forum, last March, in which she announced programs in both the Bureau of Internal Revenue and Bureau of Customs to "wipe out fraud and cheating, and to

prosecute government officials who abuse their position.” The weapons to be used in this fight are the lifestyle checks and other techniques pioneered and perfected here at the Office of the Ombudsman.

The United States is committed to continued support for the Tanodbayan and Special Prosecutor in meeting these challenges and other challenges as they arise.

The United States and the American people have been a proud partner of the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Special Prosecutor, particularly with respect to developing the skills of its investigators in financial investigation and its

prosecutors in trial advocacy. Today, we are pleased to formally hand over the Ombudsman Legal Resource Book on Public Accountability and the CD Lecture Series on Prosecuting Corruption.

These knowledge resources are designed to be useful, but the benefits of these tools are not inside the CDs but in the hands of investigators and prosecutors. It is up to the dedicated investigators and prosecutors of the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Special Prosecutor to use these tools to their utmost in order to continue the tradition of success, fairness and integrity that has come to be associated with your offices.

On behalf of the entire U.S. Government team working in the Philippines, I congratulate the men and women of the Ombudsman Editorial Team, the Ateneo Law School, CD Asia Technologies, Wall City, Justice Cipriano del Rosario, Prof. Ildefonso Jimenez and the Rule of Law Effectiveness Project for the work they have all put in to the production of this innovative legal resource book and CD lectures on prosecuting corruption. I wish the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of the Special Prosecutor and their partner agencies all the best in their vital work for the public good.

Thank you and good day to all of you.